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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 132608

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TAGS: CASC PTER ASEC SO KE

SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING: SOMALIA

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¶1. The State Department warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Somalia and recommends that U.S. citizens avoid all travel to Somalia. This replaces the Travel Warning dated November 15 2008, to update information on security concerns.

¶2. The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against all travel to Somalia, including northern Somalia. On September 17, 2009, terrorists launched a coordinated suicide-bomb attack against an African Union (AU) peacekeeping base, involving multiple car bombs against local and international targets. In another attack on December 3, 2009, suicide bombers killed three Somalia Transitional Federal Government (TFG) ministers during a graduation ceremony for Banadir University medical students in Mogadishu. There is no U.S. Embassy or other U.S. diplomatic presence in Somalia. Consequently, the U.S. Government is not in a position to assist or effectively provide services to U.S. citizens in Somalia.

¶3. Terrorist operatives and armed groups in Somalia have demonstrated their intent and capability to attack air operations at Mogadishu International Airport. Kidnapping, murder, illegal roadblocks, banditry, and other violent incidents and threats to U.S. citizens and other foreigners can occur in many regions. Inter-clan and inter-factional fighting flares up with little or no warning. Unpredictable armed conflicts among rival militias are prevalent in southern Somalia, particularly in and around Mogadishu. This has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Somali nationals and the displacement of nearly one million people.

¶4. The Sanaag and Sool Regions in eastern Somaliland, bordering on Puntland (northeastern Somalia), are particularly unsafe due to ongoing border disputes and inter-clan fighting. Lines of control in Mogadishu are unclear and frequently shift, making movement within Mogadishu extremely hazardous. There also have been

several fatal attacks and violent kidnappings against international relief workers throughout Somalia, Somaliland, and Puntland. In July 2009, a U.S. relief worker was kidnapped from a Kenyan border town and held in Somalia for over two months before being released.

¶15. U.S. citizens are urged to use extreme caution when sailing near the coast of Somalia. Merchant vessels, fishing boats, and recreational craft all risk seizure by pirates and having their crews held for ransom in the waters off the Horn of Africa, especially in the international waters near Somalia. If transit around the Horn of Africa is necessary, it is strongly recommended that vessels travel in convoys, and maintain good communications contact at all times.

¶16. U.S. citizens who travel to Somalia despite this Travel Warning are urged to register through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov> and obtain updated information on travel and security from the U.S. Embassies in neighboring countries. Travelers to the self-declared ?Republic of Somaliland? should register with the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti, and travelers to Puntland or southern Somalia should register with the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

¶17. The U.S. Embassy in Djibouti is located at Plateau du Serpent, Boulevard Marechal Joffre, Djibouti City; telephone (253) 35-39-95; after-hours telephone number

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(253) 35-13-43. The mailing address is Ambassade Americaine, B.P. 185, Djibouti, Republique de Djibouti, and their workweek is Sunday through Thursday. The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is located on United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya; telephone (254)(20) 363-6000; after-hours emergencies (254)(20) 363-6170. The mailing address is P.O. Box 606 Village Market 00621, Nairobi, Kenya.

¶18. U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Somalia and the Worldwide Caution, which are located on the Department's internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. or outside the U.S. and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

¶19. Minimize considered.

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